12 Bar BLUES

**5.ML.1 Apply the elements of music and musical techniques in order to sing and play music with accuracy and expression**

**5.ML.1.1**Illustrate independence and accuracy while singing and playing instruments within a group or ensemble.

**5.CR.1**

**Understand global, interdisciplinary, and 21st century connections with music.**

**5.CR.1.1**

**Understand how music has affected, and is reflected in, the culture, traditions, and history of the United States.**

**5.CR.1.2**

**Understand the relationships between music and concepts from other areas..**

Materials: 5th grade Spotlight on Music, for extra enrichment: Youtube video of BB King or other blues musicians. This unit in the book has good recordings of old blues so can be followed right out of the TE.

Song: Every Day I Got the Blues

This lesson is a continuation of America music and history that I teach so I talk about slaves and spirituals and how blues came out of that.

I ask if they know what it means to be “Blue” and we discuss that some. You can decide on what you want to talk about here!

Then I tell them that Blues is distinctly America, and is distinct in it’s chord progression.

A common term is “12 Bar Blues”, because there are twelve measures or “bars” that make up the entire song.

I review the letters of the “music alphabet” and put ABCDEFG on the smartboard. Then I use Roman numerals for each step, explaining that the 3 chords used in Blues are the I, IV and V. You can move the letters of the music alphabet around so that I ( one) changes. I make G the root and they figure out that C and D are the other chords.

I use the smartboard to place squares: 3 rows of 4 and color each chord box a different color. Use colors that correspond to your boomwhackers and tone bars in the kit. ( I put boxes around the letters so that they are inside a colored square)

G G G G

C C G G

D C G G

Each box is 4 beats. I tell them how the first sentence is repeated twice then a new third sentence comes along. Then I let them hear it and I point to the chords as they move in the song.

I set up about 6 the Orff instruments with G’s, C’s, and D’s. This is really easy because they only have to play octaves, and can do any rhythm they wish.. steady beat, or otherwise. This is mostly just to drive home the chord structure of blues. Following lessons will include them making up some new words and also improvisation on conga, bongo, and blues chords.

**For students who have more physical challenges, use the “kit” that we were given for this purpose:**

Tone bars with the 3 chords you are using, and/or boomwhackers.

**If the student is wheelchair bound but has use of both hands**, let them use one tone bar, preferrably the one that play the most often.

**If the student only has use of one hand**, the boomwhackers are good. They can hold it and hit it on their knee ( use a short one) or their foot, or a table or chair. Another option would be to have a classmate partner with them using the same note and they hit their boom whackers together to create the sound. I might make this a rotation with 4 or 6 kids, so that the student sees other groups of 2 doing this same technique so that they do not necessarily feel singled out.

If they appear to be getting the chord progression, change the bar or boom whacker to a different pitch, just as you would do with the rest of the class.

If they are not ( or cannot) manage this, then let them continue with the root chord, since even if it is hit at the wrong time, it will likely sound okay.

This chord progression can be used with other blues songs in the book as well. After teaching Blues for a couple of weeks I then put the students into groups of 3 or 4 and they write new words to the tune “Everyday I got the Blues” . I use the instrumental accompaniment on the CD so that they can sing their version on my classroom microphone. They perform for each other when they have their completed new verses. This usually takes two to three class periods.

After using all the blues songs I want, I have moved on in subsequent lessons to rock-n-roll, and used the Eric Clapton’s “Change the World” from 5th grade Spotlight series.

The chord progression is different than blues, but easy to follow using the same method of colored blocks to represent chords.